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Letter dated 20 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit herewith the statement made by the former President of Tanzania and East African Community facilitator of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue, Benjamin William Mkapa, at the end of the third session of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue, held in Arusha, Tanzania, from 16 to 19 February 2017. The third session was attended by former Heads of State of Burundi, the ombudsman of Burundi, representatives of registered political parties, including the ruling party, and other key political actors.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Albert **Shingiro**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 20 February 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Statement by the facilitator, His Excellency Benjamin William Mkapa, at the end of the third session of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue

I convened the third session of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue in Arusha, Tanzania, from 16 to 19 February 2017.

The session was attended by former Heads of State of Burundi, the ombudsman of Burundi, representatives of registered political parties and other key political actors.

I also met with the Special Envoys for the region and the Special Representatives of the United Nations and the African Union, who reaffirmed their support for the East African Community (EAC)-led facilitation. I am encouraged by the readiness of all stakeholders to engage and interact with each other.

During an opening plenary session, I presented the eight-point agenda identified during the previous Dialogue sessions, which, at the seventeenth Extraordinary Summit of EAC Heads of State held on 8 September 2016, was endorsed as the basis for further discussions. For ease of consideration, I condensed the eight points into four broad categories, namely, political issues; constitutional, legislative and electoral conditions; socioeconomic situation and humanitarian issues; and security, each with appropriate subheadings.

These categories were not my invention; rather they were adduced from my discussions with parties during the previous consultations with interested international organizations.

I also shared other documentation related to the Dialogue. You examined the documents individually and in groups, after which you made written submissions expressing your views and outlining your projection of the way forward. I commend you for the diligence and wide scope with which you addressed the issues and presented written responses. They will serve to concretize the Dialogue in the next phase.

From the submissions, I have noted the following:

1. The participants acknowledged that notable progress had been made in setting the right conditions for a constructive dialogue, characterized by the willingness to own the ongoing process.

2. They reaffirmed the principles and spirit of the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi as the foundation for sustainable peace, stability and security, as well as recognition of the political, economic and social rights of all Burundians.

3. While reaffirming respect for the sovereignty of the Republic of Burundi, they emphasized the obligation of the State to provide security, stability and protection of human rights for the people of Burundi.

4. The participants acknowledged that the current crisis, which is rooted in political and electoral disagreement, has resulted in substantial displacement of persons, the exile of political actors, targeted violence and reduced international financial assistance.

5. The participants denounced all forms of violence as a means of settling political disputes and committed themselves to peaceful dialogue to achieve sustainable peace and economic prosperity.

6. They pledged to seek consensus, with great urgency, on the central pillars of the path towards the next elections in 2020 and on the need for an environment conducive to a peaceful and credible electoral process.

7. The participants took note of the proposed constitutional amendments prepared internally and, while acknowledging the sovereign right of Burundi to do so, emphasized that priority should be given to the consolidation of the peace and stability of the country.

8. The participants drew attention to the famine being experienced in some parts of Burundi as a result of climate change. They therefore appealed to the international community to provide much needed relief.

9. The participants appreciated the progress made so far by the facilitator and the mediator. However, they urged the earliest involvement of the EAC Summit to add impetus to the resolution of the crisis.

10. The participants looked forward to the participation of the Government of the Republic of Burundi in order to add value and advance the process.

From the foregoing, I wish to make the following observations:

(a) There is an imperative need to hold an EAC extraordinary summit to address the impediment to the process; I will make this representation speedily to the mediator and to the Chairperson of the EAC Summit of Heads of State;

(b) From the written responses to the proposals, I have gained the impression that there is general agreement on the substantive issues. There are disagreements on the modalities of implementation. Therefore, I am persuaded that the four thematic areas remain the basis for the next Dialogue session;

(c) I wish to thank all the participants who accepted my invitation. Your presence here is testimony to your commitment to engage in ending the suffering of the people of Burundi. I also wish to thank the Special Envoys and Special Representatives for the expression of their total support to the process.

You will shortly hear from the facilitator concerning the date and venue of the next encounter. Meanwhile, travel safely back to your destinations and keep the spirit of unity and reconciliation alive.

God bless Burundi, God bless Africa!

Done at Arusha, Tanzania, this 19th day of February 2017.